

Outreach, by Experience and Resource Level

Your ability to promote your Town Hall Meeting depends on both your experience with media outreach and the resources you have available for this function. In reality, many community-based organizations do not have the staffing or resources needed to conduct large-scale multimedia promotion.

The media outreach steps below are organized as basic, intermediate, and advanced, according to the experience or resource level required. Your goal should be to accomplish the basic steps and then increase outreach as you gain new skills, build media contacts, and leverage resources of partnering organizations.

Basic

- ❑ Develop a promotion plan that is based on your target audiences, the call to action for each audience, messages that can engage an audience, and the outlets you will use to reach this audience.
- ❑ Create an outreach calendar that guides activities prior to, during, and after the Town Hall Meeting.
- ❑ Ensure that someone is in charge of media outreach, whether he or she is a paid staff member or a volunteer. College students majoring in public relations may be willing to help for the experience.
- ❑ Construct a media contact list that represents all of the available media outlets in your community. At a minimum, include local radio and television stations and newspapers (remember the small local press). Research which reporters cover which topics, and pitch your story accordingly.
- ❑ Develop messages and talking points most likely to appeal to your target audience. Include these in your promotional materials for media and internal use.
- ❑ Develop and disseminate a flyer about your Town Hall Meeting that can be posted on your website and places where your target audience gathers. Think outside the box: Laundromats, community boards in grocery stores, and gyms may be good sites for flyers.
- ❑ Confirm your organization's spokesperson. He or she should be someone who can effectively articulate the issues. Your spokesperson also should have the ability to answer difficult questions before, during, and after your Town Hall Meeting.
- ❑ Ensure that your media followup involves phone calls, e-mails, and text messages.
- ❑ Thank all media contacts for their interest and involvement.

Intermediate

- ❑ Engage partners who can effectively promote your Town Hall Meeting among their constituents.
- ❑ Develop customizable, electronic flyers about your Town Hall Meeting for your partners to disseminate.
- ❑ Provide sample e-mail language that your partners can use when they spread the word about the Town Hall Meeting.
- ❑ Write a clear, concise factsheet that places the local story of underage drinking into a national context. Make these facts part of your media outreach.
- ❑ Create a media advisory, press release, and press kit.
- ❑ Have a photographer or videographer on hand who can document your Town Hall Meeting for posting on your website, your Facebook page, or YouTube. You may be able to tap local professionals or college students for this task.
- ❑ Ensure that your organization obtains all talking points used by speakers at your event, thus ensuring that you have access to pull quotes that can be used in subsequent press materials.

Advanced

- ❑ Conduct “person-on-the-street” participant interviews to obtain immediate feedback about your event.
- ❑ Create and disseminate radio and television public service announcements.
- ❑ Schedule a local radio or television interview about your event before or after it takes place.
- ❑ Develop materials that contain all of your partners’ logos, thus presenting a unified voice to the community.
- ❑ Consistently use social media—Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Snapchat—to promote your Town Hall Meeting prior to, during, and after the event.